

Message Text

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41

ACTION ARA-10

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INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-15 PRS-01 /058 W

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R 171750Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO USCINCSO

CMDR 193D INF BGDE FT AMADOR CZ

CMDR USAF SOUTHERN DIVISION AIR

CMDR US NAVAL STATION PANAMA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 830

SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 2158

USCINCSO FOR LT GENERAL MCAULIFFE, 193TH INF BGDE (CZ) FOR
MAJOR GENERAL BREEDLOVE, US NAVAL STATION PANAMA FOR CAPTAIN
BOSTON FROM AMBASSADOR MELOY

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: GT SWEL OTA

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE OF MILGP PERSONNEL IN DISASTER RELIEF

1. COLONEL CORGETT AND I HAVE PONDERED HOW BEST TO RECOGNIZE
THE TRULY SUPERLATIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE MILITARY PERSONNEL
IN THE USMILGP IN RESPONDING TO THE WORST NATURAL DISASTER
IN THE RECORDED HISTORY OF CENTRAL AMERICA. WE BOTH WISHED
TO PUT THE RECOGNITION IN A FORM THAT WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON
THE CAREERS OF THESE MEN, AND DECIDED FINALLY THAT MAKING THE
ADDRESSEES OF THIS MESSAGE AWARE OF THEIR EXTRAORDINARY
ACHIEVEMENTS WOULD BE THE MOST USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE
COURSE OF ACTION.

2. I THINK IT UNNECESSARY TO DETAIL FOR THE ADDRESSEES,
WHO WERE THEMSELVES INVOLVED, THE OVERALL SCOPE OF
ACTIVITIES MANAGED BY THIS GROUP. SUFFICE IT TO SAY
THAT THESE MEN, FINDING THEIR ROLES ABRUPTLY CHANGED

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FROM MANAGEMENT OF ROUTINE SECURITY ASSISTANCE FUNCTIONS

TO OPERATIONS STAFF OFFICERS CONTROLLING MAJOR UNITS THAT INCLUDED A FIELD HOSPITAL, LARGE HELICOPTER CONTINGENTS, SURVEY TEAMS AND NUMEROUS SPECIAL DETACHMENTS, ALL COMPRISING OVER 500 MILITARY PERSONNEL, RESPONDED WITH A DISPLAY OF

PROFESSIONALISM THAT WAS TRULY ADMIRABLE. AS SEVERAL HIGH LEVEL WASHINGTON VISITORS HAVE TOLD US, THE MILITARY RELIEF OPERATIONS WERE A "TEXTBOOK CASE."

3. COLONEL ROBERT E. WALLER, USAF, WAS ACTING MILGP COMMANDER ON FEBRUARY 4 IN THE ABSENCE OF COLONEL CORBETT WHO RETURNED FROM TDY IN THE CONUS ON FEBRUARY 5. COLONEL WALLER'S CALM, SURE AND DELIBERATE ASSESSMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE AMBASSADOR WERE INSTRUMENTAL TO THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS THAT BROUGHT 16 MILITARY RELIEF FLIGHTS AND THE DISASTER AREA SURVEY TEAM TO GUATEMALA ON FEBRUARY 4, AND A US ARMY FIELD HOSPITAL IN FEBRUARY 5. THROUGHOUT THE ENSUING EXERCISE, COLONEL WALLER AND HIS ASSISTANT MAJOR GEORGE L. TUZO, HANDLED ALL FLIGHT OPERATIONS IN A SUPERLATIVE MANNER. OPERATIONS INCLUDED ALL INCOMING AND DEPARTING INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS AND INTERNAL US ARMY HELICOPTER OPERATIONS COMPRISING 8 CH-47 CHINOOK AND 9 UH-1H HUEY. THEIR COORDINATION WITH GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE OFFICIALS, AIRPORT AUTHORITY OFFICIALS AND THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE ASSURED FIELD, RAMP SPACE, CLEARANCE AND OTHER HELP AND FACILITIES ON A PRIORITY BASIS TO ALL US AND MANY THIRD COUNTRY RELIEF FLIGHTS. INTERNAL US HELICOPTER OPERATIONS WERE PERFECTLY COORDINATED WITH GNBG CAPABILITIES, AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAMS UNDER THE CONTROL OF COLONEL WALLER AND MAJOR TUZO HANDLED ALL TRAFFIC CONTROL AT SEVERAL INTERIOR AIR HEADS AND ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS AT LA AURORA AIRPORT IN GUATEMALA CITY. COLONEL WALLER ALSO SERVED AS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE OVERALL MILITARY RELIEF EFFORT. THE AIR OPERATIONS ACTIVITIES WERE ALSO GREATLY FACILITATED BY THE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES OF THE NON-COMMISSIONED MEMBERS OF THE MILGP AIR SECTION, TECHNICAL SERGEANTS JUAN FONT AND JUAN CHACON.

4. COMMANDER WILLIAM S. BROWN, JR., USN, WAS THE PRIME MOVER IN ORGANIZING AND SUPERVISING THE OPERATIONS AND

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COMMUNICATIONS CENTER OPERATED BY THE MILGP ON A 24- HOUR BASIS FROM FEBRUARY 4 TO FEBRUARY 29. COMMANDER BROWN, WHO SELDOM LEFT THE CENTER DURING ITS FIRST WEEK OF OPERATION, DISPLAYED A SELDOM SEEN GENIUS FOR ORGANIZATION, DISTRIBUTION OF WORKLOADS, IMPROVISATION AND INNOVATION, AND SCRUPULOUS FOLLOW UP IN THE MIDST OF A CRISIS WITH FAST BREAKING ACTION. WHEN THE DECISION WAS MADE TO

DEPLOY THE ENGINEER TASK FORCE BY SEA, HE FORMED AND HEADED A WORKING GROUP OF GUATEMALAN NAVY OFFICERS AND HARSAP TECHNICIANS PRESENT BY COINCIDENCE AT SANTO TOMAS, AND BEGAN IMMEDIATELY TO PROVIDE THE USN WITH DETAILED INFORMATION UPON WHICH TO PLAN THE DEBARKATION. HE FLEW WITH HIS GROUP TO RENDEZVOUS WITH THE FLOTILLA FLAGSHIP AND FINALIZE DEBARKATION PLANS, WHICH INCLUDED THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL COOPERATION OF THE PORT AUTHORITY IN CLEARING THE PIERS AND MAKING AVAILABLE ALL OF ITS CRANES, MATERIALS HANDLING EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES. IT WAS A MAGNIFICENT DISPLAY OF PROFESSIONAL AND NEGOTIATING SKILLS.

5. THE OPERATIONS CENTER WAS MANNED BY MAJOR DAVID L. HALSE, USA, MAJOR JACOB WILLIAM LEISEN, USA, MAJOR RICHARD H. GILLESPIE, USA, AND MAJOR STERLING J. SOWDEN, USAF, ALL OF WHOM WORKED 16-18 HOUR SHIFTS DURING THE EMERGENCY RELIEF PHASE AND ALL OF WHOM FREQUENTLY RESPONDED TO EVMMERGENCIES AS ACTION TROUBLE SHOOTERS IN THE FIELD DURING PERIODS WHEN THEY WERE NOT MAN- NING THE CENTER. THEIR CONTACTS AMONG GUATEMALAN OFFICIALS AND THEIR LINGUISTIC ABILITIES WERE ESSENTIAL IN COORDINATING RELIEF EFFORTS AND IN GAINING ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTIC SUPPORT FROM THE GOG FOR THE US EFFORT. IT WOULD IM- POSSIBLE TO ENUMERATE THE COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE ON THE PART OF EACH OF THESE OFFICERS. SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT EACH PERFORMED WITH THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF PROFESSIONALISM.

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R 171750Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO USCINCSO

COMDR 193TH INF BDE FT AMADOR (CZ)

CMDR USAF SOUTHERN DIVISION AIR

CMDR US NAVAL STATION PANAMA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 831

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6. MAJOR SILVIO J. ROMERO, USA, SERVED AS THE US LIAISON OFFICER AND COORDINATOR WITH THE GOG NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE, THE BODY WHICH COORDINATED THE ENTIRE RELIEF EFFORT. MAJOR ROMERO, A BRILLIANT OFFICER OF STRONG PERSONALITY, PROVED TO BE MUCH MORE THAN A "LIAISON" OFFICER. HIS RECOMMENDATIONS HAD A DECIDED IMPACT ON DECISION MADE BY THE HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE; I.E. HOW BEST TO EMPLOY US AND OTHER THIRD COUNTRY AIR TRANSPORT RESOURCES, WHERE TO LOCATE REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL RELIEF CENTERS, ETC. AS AN ADDITIONAL DUTY, MAJOR ROMERO COMPILED THE DATA FOR AND WROTE THE DAILY MILGP SITREPS WHICH HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY SOME DISASTER RELIEF SPECIALISTS AS THE MOST COMPLETE AND INFORMATIVE THEY HAVE SEEN.

7. LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM ROGER WHITLEY, JR., USA, SERVED AS EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE DISASTER RELIEF TASK FORCE AND CHIEF TROUBLE SHOOTER FOR COMUSMILGP. IN THE FORMER CAPACITY, AS HEADQUARTERS COMMANDANT, HE WAS CHARGED WITH RECEIVING, BRIEFING, ASSIGNING AND PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ALL AUGMENTATION PERSONNEL AND UNITS AND SEEING TO THEIR NECESSITIES. IN THE LATTER CAPACITY HE SUCCESSIVELY SET UP THE MEDICAL UNCLASSIFIED

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EVACUATION SYSTEM FOR THE 47TH FIELD HOSPITAL, ESTABLISHED THE FIRST TASK FORCE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION NETS, PROVIDED FOR INDIGENOUS FOOD FOR HOSPITALIZED INDIAN PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND HEADED THE RETROGRADE PLANNING STAFF. EVERY TASK WAS PERFORMED WITH DISTINCTION, DISPATCH AND GREAT THOROUGHNESS.

8. MSG JERRY J. ABEYTA, USA, SERVED THE COMUSMILGP AS SERGEANT MAJOR, AND THE OPERATIONS CENTER AS OPERATIONS SERGEANT IN A SUPERLATIVE MANNER. IN ADDITION HE MANNED A MARS STATION FOR LONG HOURS EACH DAY PASSING TRAFFIC TO WORRIED RELATIVES AND FRIENDS IN THE US AND ELSEWHERE.

9. MAJOR GERALD F. MEYER, USA, MAINTAINED THE CONTINUITY OF MILGP "PEACETIME" OPERATIONS, TOOK CARE OF MILGP DEPENDENTS AND GUATEMALAN EMPLOYEES WHO HAD SUFFERED TERRIBLY IN THE EARTHQUAKE, HANDLED ALL PAY, EMERGENCY LEAVES, MEDICAL EVACUATION AND ESSENTIAL ADMINISTRATION FOR AUGMENTEES, AND FOUND NUMEROUS WAYS TO MAKE LIFE MORE BEARABLE FOR US TROOPS INVOLVED

IN RELIEF OPERATIONS. HIS INITIATIVE IN FINDING NEW OFFICES FOR THE MILGP AFTER ITS BUILDING WAS DECLARED UNSAFE, SAFEGUARDING AND MOVING CLASSIFIED AND OTHER ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS, ARRANGING FOR TRANSFER OF TELEPHONES AND LINES, AND ESPECIALLY ATTENTION TO THE WELFARE OF MILGP FAMILIES, ALLOWED THE COMMANDER AND OTHER OFFICERS TO ATTACK OPERATIONAL AND PLANNING PROBLEMS WITH A DEGREE OF FREEDOM FROM WORRY AND FROM DAY TO DAY DETAIL THAT WAS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE OVERALL EFFORT.

10. COLONEL CORBETT ASSURES ME THAT THE PERFORMANCES WILL BE RECOGNIZED IN THE FITNESS REPORTS THAT HE PREPARES IN DUE COURSE. I HOPE THE ADDRESSEES WILL SEE FIT TO CONSIDER THESE REMARKS IN ENDORSING THE REPORTS. FOR MY PART I CAN SAY THAT IF THIS GROUP REPRESENTS ANYTHING LIKE A CROSS SECTION OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY PROFESSION IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES, OUR COUNTRY IS FORTUNATE INDEED.

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